



SACP Banner, Cradock 4 Funeral, July 20, 1985. © Gille de Vlieg

Gille de Vlieg would like to hear from anyone who is in this or any of her other photographs. She is on Facebook, or e-mail at gille@mweb.co.za

Banners and Flags

The above image is of the display of an SACP banner at the funeral of the Cradock 4 martyrs Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Fort Calata and Sicelo Mhlauli in 1985.

This is a most powerful and actual image of a communist party legalising itself. Before this, communist party insignia were hardly ever seen in South Africa. The Party had been banned in May, 1950. But within less than five years after the Cradock 4 funeral, the Party was not only *de facto* (in practice), but officially legal again. That was in February, 1990.

Here is an edited version of e-mail correspondence with the photographer, Gille de Vlieg, who very kindly responded to a request to send a suitable version of her image of the SACP Banner being displayed at the Cradock 4 Funeral, 20 July 1985:

(Communist University): *“Your image will be good to show the power of photography for a start, and then the use of the banner. Not least is to remind people of the Cradock 4. Also the fact that to an extent SACP unbanned itself, legalised itself, and this funeral of the Cradock 4 was the emphatic moment when they "came out", and you were there, taking the pictures. Less than 5 years later, the SACP was officially legalised again after 40 years of banning. This is a very important point to make in my opinion, because there are people who mistakenly glamorise underground politics. I want to show evidence that the struggle of the clandestine is firstly against being clandestine, and never to make a virtue of it.*

(Gille de Vlieg): *“I was a Black Sash member and was fortunate to meet Matthew Goniwe briefly when he came to address our Conference in March 1985. I remember the Funeral of the Cradock Four very well. Another Black Sash member and I had made a banner for the Black Sash, and as we entered the 'stadium' the youth took our banner and ran around the 'stadium' grounds with it and then put it up next to the SACP banner. On the SABC news that night the 2 banners were shown over and over.*

"I also remember driving back through the night and hearing that a State of Emergency had been declared. I had many friends on the buses that returned from the funeral, and I actually went to John Vorster police station where they had taken the buses and saw people being taken off the buses and searched.

"I agree that the SACP did unban itself at that time. I believe the people who made the banner were Obed Bapela and Maurice Smithers.

"SAHA (SA History Archives) has many of my photographs, their website is www.saha.org.za and their physical address is in the Womens' Jail on Constitution Hill. It is rather ironic for me because I spent a time in detention just across the road from there in Hillbrow Police Station in 1986. I'm happy for you to have a low res of the image for the reasons you outlined. I am also happy for you to link it to my email address [gille@mweb.co.za].

Gille de Vlieg is also on Facebook. She has particularly requested that any people who recognise themselves in her photographs contact her. She would love to hear from you.



SACP & Black Sash banners, Cradock 4 Funeral, 20 July 20 1985. © Gille de Vlieg

More about the clandestine

The struggle to cease being clandestine, and to become legal, does not end when formal legality is achieved. The struggle to be out and to be openly proclaiming who we are, whether as SACP, as ANC or as COSATU unions, or as any other mass organisation, continues against different kinds of opposition.

These include the bourgeois mass media, such as for example eTV and eNCA, and print media, most of which strive at all times to show the unorganised as the normal, silent majority that they speak for. At the same time, they represent the organised people – those with hard-won collective agency – as not having agency, or otherwise just ignore the Movement and do not report its actions at all.

This conflict is at the heart of the question of Agitprop. It is the reason why Agitprop is constantly necessary. The organised

masses face a constant counter-Agitprop, which is better funded and, in some media, but not in all, more extensive than our own.

Then there is the extent to which the movement mistakenly removes itself from the public realm. This happens when we say that the movement's business must not be done in public. But in fact the movement's business is supposed to be done in public. What we have to guard against is not exposure, but manipulation by selective exposure combined with selective concealment, distortion and lies. The best defence against all of these is openness.

Your Branch Banner and Flags

Usually branches get their banners made for them, and pay.

The banner is likely to be any branch's first big purchase. It needs to be looked after carefully and kept ready for use.



SACP Flag

The SACP Constitution begins:

1. NAME

The name of the organisation shall be the South African Communist Party (SACP).

2. SYMBOL AND FLAG

The symbol of the SACP shall be a black star containing a gold hammer and sickle. The flag of the SACP shall be red with the symbol placed in the top left-hand corner.

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